

RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND
2022-2025

**Winchester District Rural England Prosperity Fund
Guidance 2024-25**

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About the Rural England Prosperity Fund

Government states that the fund has been created as “rural areas often face specific challenges” including:

- lower productivity rates
- poorer connectivity
- poorer access to key services.

It funds **capital** projects for small businesses and community infrastructure to help improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.

Rural Fund grants must be used for **capital** projects and spent on lasting assets such as buildings or equipment. All projects must account for the ongoing maintenance costs and responsibility for this will remain with the asset owner. No asset liability shall be transferred to council as a consequence of any grant funding.

Prospectus: [Rural England Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101422/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus.pdf)

The Rural Fund provides capital funding to:

- support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy. This includes farm businesses looking to diversify income streams
- support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy

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Projects must be in a rural areas and for Rural Fund purposes, rural areas are:

- towns, villages and hamlets with populations below 10,000 and the wider countryside
- market or 'hub towns' with populations of up to 30,000 that serve their surrounding rural areas as centres of employment and in providing services.
- To see whether you are located within an eligible area for REPF, open the link to [DEFRA's Magic Map](#) and follow the instructions below:
- DEFRA Map to show REPF eligible areas: Magic Map Application
- Under 'Table of Contents' select 'Administrative Geographies' then 'Other Administrative Boundaries' then select 'Rural England Prosperity Fund'
- Search for the location by entering the postcode within the search bar (top left of page) or manually zoom in on a location
- You will find a toolbar of icons above the map. Select the 'Identify' icon and click on the location of your project on the map. A pop-up box will appear notifying you if the area is considered rural for the purposes of REPF

This means that the city centre (town wards) is excluded from this fund

Initial Information

We welcome applications for grant awards in the £15,000 to £40,000 range and encourage you to contact prosperity@winchester.gov.uk for a preliminary discussion, regardless of the size of your project.

Opening Date: Monday 13 November 2023

Closing Date: Friday 5 January 2024, 5pm

Applicants Notified: March/April 2024

- Any enquiries regarding the fund or submission of an application should be directed to prosperity@winchester.gov.uk
- This is a competitive fund for applications and applications will be assessed against the published evaluation criteria.
- Only one application can be made per organisation, per year.

Priorities

We are looking for businesses and community groups working on projects that align with the below priorities. Projects can span more than one priority – i.e micro-enterprise grants and cultural venue grants.

Sustainable Growth Grants - £140,000

- Micro-enterprise grants
 - creating jobs and boosting community cohesion
 - increasing private sector investment in growth

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- Circular economy grants
 - o supporting the setting up or enhancement of rural circular economy projects
- E7 Support for active travel enhancements
 - o creation of new foot / cycle paths
 - o upgrading of existing foot / cycle paths
- E11 Net Zero Infrastructure
 - o provision of net zero infrastructure for rural communities and to support rural tourism
 - o community Hubs for Entrepreneurs
 - o funding for resilience infrastructure and nature-based solutions to protect the local community

Cultural Grants – £70,000

- E4 Enhancing existing cultural, historic & heritage institutions offer
 - o improving visitor experience and accessibility of these assets. For example by: creating wheelchair accessible and step free access that goes beyond statutory requirements
 - o providing all terrain wheelchairs allowing access to new areas of sites
- E6 Cultural venue grants for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities
 - o maker spaces
 - o alterations in cultural venues
- E17 Development & promotion of visitor economy
 - o development of local visitor trails and infrastructure to support this
 - o development of local tourist attractions and local visitor experiences

Community Infrastructure Grants - £90,000

- E9 Volunteering and Social Action
 - o enabling people to develop volunteering and social action projects
- E15 Digital connectivity for community facilities
 - o provision of gigabit capable digital infrastructure at rural hubs for community use – projects must align with Project Gigabit.
- E26 Growing the local Social Economy
 - o creation of multifunctional rural business hubs providing shared workspace and networking opportunities for rural businesses
 - o establishment of rural community businesses / community owned shops

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- purchase of equipment to showcase local food and drink products such as regional information display boards

Green and Blue Spaces - £50,000

- E3 Enhancing rural green and blue infrastructure
 - creating community gardens, green spaces, watercourses and embankments
 - greening of streets and paths or incorporating natural features into wider public spaces

Eligibility - Who can apply

Any organisation with legal status can receive funding to deliver a REPF intervention, this may include:

- local authorities / Parish Councils,
- public sector organisations,
- higher and further education institutions,
- private sector companies,
- voluntary organisations and registered charities.

Organisations based outside the Winchester district can apply but all project activity, beneficiaries and outcomes must be delivered within the district.

- Businesses are required to match fund their project by 50%
- All project spend must be completed by March 2025.

You cannot apply for funding for a project already being supported by Defra funding including:

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme
- The Farming Investment Fund
- The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund

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What we are unable to fund:

<i>Organisations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations whose main objective is to raise funds for other Charitable organisations • Political organisations
<i>Activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local or national appeals and fundraising activities • Activities which are of a wholly and exclusively political or religious nature, or organisations supporting political activism • paid for lobbying, entertaining, petitioning or challenging decisions, which means using the Fund to lobby (via an external firm or in-house staff) in order to undertake activities intended to influence or attempt to influence Parliament, government or political activity including the receipt of UKSPF funding; or attempting to influence legislative or regulatory action • payments for activities of a party political or exclusively religious nature • VAT reclaimable from HMRC • gifts, or payments for gifts or donations • statutory fines, criminal fines or penalties • payments for works or activities which the lead local authority, project deliverer, end beneficiary, or any member of their partnership has a statutory duty to undertake, or that are fully funded by other sources • contingencies and contingent liabilities • dividends • bad debts, costs resulting from the deferral of payments to creditors, or winding up a company • expenses in respect of litigation, unfair dismissal or other compensation • costs incurred by individuals in setting up and contributing towards private pension schemes

Subsidy Control

You are required to consider the UK Subsidy Control Scheme as part of your application. [UK subsidy control regime - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-subsidy-control-regime)

Financial Sustainability

Applicants must be able to demonstrate the financial sustainability of their organisation. The council has the right to withdraw any offer of grant aid if, on scrutiny, it becomes apparent that the organisation is not sustainable.

To this end the council will undertake financial due diligence by carrying out a Dunn & Bradstreet check on the organisation making the application.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome in writing.

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Planning permissions and licences

Since this is a capital grant, designed to finance assets such as buildings and equipment, we are expecting to receive some applications for activities that may require permission. If you are unsure whether elements of your project may need approval, please check [here](#). The process of applying for planning consent can be lengthy and might affect your ability to complete your project by the end of March 2025.

Policies and Insurances

Organisations should have the relevant policies and permissions in place in order to operate, deliver projects and or provide their service. As a minimum this should include:

- a Adequate Third Party Public Liability and Employers' Liability Insurance.
- b Data Protection Policy
- c Conflict of Interest Policy
- d Antislavery Policy
- e Anti-fraud Policy
- f Environmental Policy
- g Equality and Diversity Policy
- h Health and Safety Policy
- i Volunteer Policy
- j Safeguarding Policy

Organisations working with children, young people or vulnerable adults must have a robust protection policy in place and ensure that all active staff and volunteers have undertaken a DBS check. If you do not have one of these policies in place, you must provide us with an adequate reason, or a date which you commit to implementing the policy.

Delivery Timeline

Activity can start from April 2024 onwards, once a signed funding agreement is place. We cannot retrospectively fund work that has taken place. All financial project activity must end by March 2025. We reserve the right to amend this date if for example the government makes changes to the REPF programme.

Submitting your application

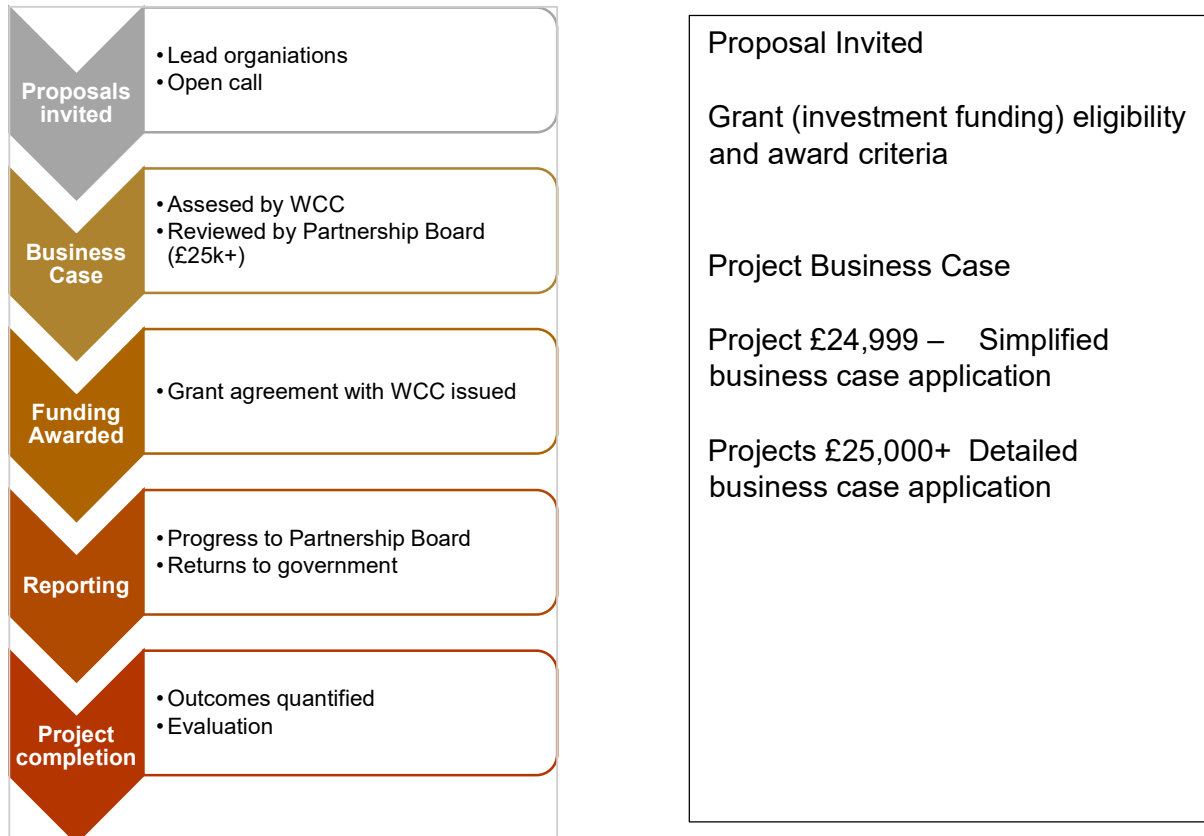
Applications should be made via the official application form and submitted by the agreed deadline found [on our website](#).

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We use an online system called Flexigrant to manage the grant application process. You will need to register with Flexigrant if you have not made a previous application with Winchester City Council. Guidance is available alongside the questions, but if you require any additional support please contact prosperity@winchester.gov.uk.

Evaluation and Grant Award Process

Grants (investment funding) process for project investments



This is a competitive fund and each application will be assessed and scored against the grant eligibility and criteria by a panel of Officers.

Additionally, applications for funding over £25,000 will be reviewed by the Partnership Board.

At the time the application is submitted, to enable the Council to assess applications fully, all sections must be completed with all the information you wish considered together with

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all the documents requested. There will not be a further opportunity to provide additional details.

There are a number of pass or fail questions in the application form. If any of these are scored as a fail, the application will not be considered any further. In addition to these the application provided by the applicant will be tested against the criteria outlined below and considered either acceptable or unacceptable, In the instance that the assessment is deemed unacceptable the application will not be considered any further.

The Councils decisions with regards to funding are discretionary and no appeals process is available.

Successful applicants will be required to sign a grant funding agreement with Winchester City Council. An example of the grant agreement is published on our website.

Applicants must be ready to start delivery immediately after signing the funding agreement.

All applications will be assessed and evaluated using a consistent approach and scored against the criteria set out below:

Assessment Area	Responses to the following questions will be considered	Scoring weighting
Achievement of fund priorities, outputs and outcomes	4.1 Project Details 4.2 Project Impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiaries • Equality & diversity • Sustainability 4.3 Outputs and Outcomes	50%
Deliverability	4.4 Project Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dates & milestones • Experience & capacity • Risks 	20%
Monitoring and Evaluation	4.5 Monitoring & Evaluation	10%
Funding	5.1 Project costs 5.1 Finance Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value for money & affordability 	20%

Score	Each assessment area will be scored in accordance with the following scoring model.
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5 – Excellent	The response exceeds the required standard, answers the area of assessment with precision and relevance, and adds value and innovation as appropriate. Exceptional demonstration by the applicant of the relevant ability, understanding, skills, and quality measures required to provide meet the requirements of the fund. Strong evidence to support the proposal is provided, where appropriate.
4 – Good	The response meets the required standard, answers the areas of assessment fully and with relevance. Good demonstration by the applicant of the relevant ability, understanding, skills, and quality measures required to meet the requirements of the fund. Good evidence to support the proposal, where appropriate.
3 – Satisfactory	The response meets the minimum required standard in an acceptable level of detail. Satisfactory demonstration by the applicant of the relevant ability, understanding, skills and quality measures required to meet the requirements of the fund. Standard or generic evidence is provided to support the proposal, where appropriate.
2 – Minor Reservations	The response partially meets the minimum required standard and relevance but with some detail missing or not answered. Contains minor shortcomings in the demonstration by the applicant of the relevant ability, understanding, skills and quality measures required to deliver the requirements of the fund. Limited evidence is provided to support the response, where appropriate.
1 – Serious Reservations	The response fails to meet the minimum required standard. Inadequate detail is provided, which is not relevant to the requirements of the area of assessment or there are significant omissions meaning there are considerable reservations of the applicant’s relevant ability, understanding, skills, and quality measures required to meet the requirements of the fund. Little or no evidence to support the response is provided and raises many concerns.
0 – no score – Fail	Applications that ‘Fail’ will not be considered further No response or information is provided to allow proper evaluation, ability is not evidenced.

The council reserves the right to reject the application entirely if it receives scores of ‘2 - minor reservations’ or ‘1’ – serious reservations’.

Payments

The grant will be paid to you in arrears upon receipt of proof of defrayal (payments), an updated output and outcome report, and a project narrative. This will all be managed through the same online system that manages your application. Claims can be made on a quarterly basis, with a maximum of three staged payments.

Reporting Requirements

Applicants must ensure that governance is in place to achieve the reporting requirements of the fund, including expenditure, outputs and outcomes. Applicants will be expected to submit reports on the following dates. These are subject to change:

2nd January 2024

2nd April 2024

1st July 2024

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1st October 2024

2nd January 2025

1st April 2025

The REPF also requires all projects to be reported to the WTO – this will be included in the reporting form and will not be a separate requirement.

Publicity

Applicants must adhere to the published branding and marketing requirements of Rural England Prosperity Fund which will be included in contract information.

Procurement

All grant spend must follow the below Procurement guidance. Any costs not following this guidance will not be permitted.		
Minimum procedure	Minimum procedure	
Obtain single verbal or written quotation, or use suitable framework agreement	£0 - £2,499	Direct award
Determine the evaluation criteria and model Invite a minimum of three written quotations	£2,500 - £24,999	3 written quotes or prices sought from relevant suppliers of goods, works and / or services

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All grant spend must follow the below Procurement guidance. Any costs not following this guidance will not be permitted.		
Minimum procedure	Minimum procedure	
Formal competitive tenders have been invited either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by Public Invitation to Tender (Open Tender) 	Over £25,000	Formal tender process